

Book 'em

Keep your kids awash in words with one of these book series

by Rebecca May

IT'S a dilemma passed down through generations: How do I get my kids to read? Don't let them warp brain cells with 'toons and Nintendo; get them hooked on a book series. Though it sounds trite, there really is something for everyone.

The Classics. Some things get better with age; "The Hardy Boys" and "Nancy Drew" are no exception. These mystery series have been around since the late 1920s, and several installments are included on the all-time best-selling children's hardcovers list. But when it comes to all-time best sellers, nothing can compete with the "Goosebumps" series. R.L. Stine's scary yet humorous tales are a huge hit around the world; they even spawned a TV series and touring stage show. But hot on Stine's heels is the "Animorphs" series, a cur-

rent best seller. This kid favorite, about pre-teens who transform into animals, also has made it to the small screen. (But tell your children to read the books first.)

FGO (For Girls Only). The bulk of book series involve female protagonists, whether it's a period piece, such as "Dear America" (stories of early U.S. settlers written in diary form) or the fantastical fairy tales of "Stardust Classics." But the more successful series are also more contemporary. Francine Pascal's "Sweet Valley High," a best-selling Young Adult series, did so well that she created "Sweet Valley Jr. High" and "The Unicorn Club" for a younger audience. Ann M. Martin, whose "The Baby-Sitters Club" landed on the all-time best-selling children's paperbacks list, created a new series called "California Diaries" that looks to be another winner. Each diary deals with the pressures of being an adolescent, but in a cool way.

Sports. Of all the categories, this one is the thinnest. (Maybe that's because kids would

rather play sports than read about them.)

There's "NASCAR," which focuses on racing, and "Silver Blades," a series about figure skating. But the most-written-about sport isn't football or basketball; it's horseback riding. If your daughter dreams of owning a pony, introduce her to "Thoroughbred" or "The Saddle Club."

Entertainment-inspired. So your kids still won't turn off the tube? Then try this for a compromise: Read books based on popular TV and movie characters. For starters, there's the "Star Wars: Galaxy of Fear" series. Then there's Nickelodeon's "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" and "The Secret World of Alex Mack." And don't forget "Wishbone," "Club Stephanie" (of "Full House" fame), "Sabrina the Teenage Witch" and the newly created "Touched by an Angel."

But all these books don't come close to the Olsen twins' empire. Mary-Kate and Ashley have four series under their belts, including the upcoming "Two of a Kind."

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Apr 21, 2025